ON PATRIOTISM.

THE CONDITION, PROSPECTS, AND DUTIES

OF THE

AMERICAN PEOPLE.

A SERMON

DELIVERED ON FAST DAY AT CHURCH GREEN, BOSTON.

BY THE

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[The Congregation, at whose request this Sermon is printed, will observe that a part of it was omitted in the delivery.]

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DISCOURSE.

Psalm cxxii. 2, 7, and 8 verses. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, peace be within thee.

And Matthew xxiii. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

I CANNOT help noticing, as I pass, this extraordinary language of Christ. Poor, neglected, unknown, a simple teacher by the way-sides of Judea, with no position in worldly eyes; yet if he had been a departing king, mourning over his people, he could not have spoken more loftily. Is there not some strange, unborrowed, supernal majesty in this appeal?

But it is not this of which I am to speak now, or for which I have drawn my text from sacred records, several hundred years apart. It is rather to point out the abiding naturalness and beauty of the sentiment of patriotism. For thus it is, that from age to age are forever echoing, words of every language, which proclaim how dear is men's native land. From David, who sung that ancient song, to him who wept over Jerusalem; and by all men

who have felt the touches of the gentlest or of the grandest humanity, thus have been repeated the words—songs, adjurations, or words of orators or historians, which proclaim the sacredness of country and home. Whether we can explain the sentiment or not, all men feel it, and nobody ever thought of defending it. There are sentiments indeed, that are more expansive. Our minds naturally range beyond all local boundaries. Science and philosophy are of no country. We belong to the world, it is true; and there is a humanity that is as wide as the world. But, that tract of earth which I call my native soil, my native clime: that spot where my childhood grew, where my parents have lived, and my kindred shall live after me; that is holy ground, set apart and severed from all the world beside; and framed, ay, its very hills and valleys, its slopes and river-banks, moulded and framed into some mysterious ties and sympathies with my very life and being. And I must be able to tell, what never yet was told—to tell what this inmost life and being *are*, before I can interpret all that is written on this tablet of home and country; before I can tell what home and country *mean*.

But one thing is plain and palpable to my mind, that when I say "my country," I say what no amplification can add to; that I say more than any epithets can describe; that I speak of that which is a part of me, and I of it; that whatever touches it, touches me; and whoever assails it, assails me. It must be a dull man that feels neither pride nor shame for his native land. And if, from a disbanded nationality, I were wandering and fleeing, and the world should point the finger and say,

"aha! ye had not the force nor sense nor virtue to live, or keep your bond, or hold together;" that taunt would darken the very shadow and sorrow of exile.

And yet, though as I firmly believe, there never was a country which men have had more reason to love and cherish, than we have to love and cherish this country; yet here and among us, I think that the sentiment of patriotism is exposed to peculiar dangers. We have no uniting head, King or Queen, to whom the feeling of patriotic loyalty can attach itself. *Our* devotion is to an abstract Constitution; and though it is a noble kind of devotion if it can be sustained; yet if you were to cross to the father-land, you would be struck with the difference between our respect for the Constitution and the personal feeling which rises from a whole people to the fair majesty of England; to a crown which is at once the top of honor, and set round with all the gems of private virtue. Then again, there is nothing here to shield the head of the State, from every sort of violent and even scurrilous abuse. Every newly-chosen President seems to be set up, not as the image of the public order, but as a target to be shot at. The attack of course provokes defence; but the defence is apt to take the tone of partizanship rather than of true and unbiased respect. All this must hurt the sentiment of patriotism. If the head of the family, the judge on the bench, the minister at the altar, were the subject of this perpetual wrangling, the very institutions they preside over—home, law, religion—must suffer indignity and dishonor from such treatment. In a free State, it may be said, can anything be done to prevent it? That I will consider soon; at any rate I will consider

whether we should not try to do something. But once more; our freedom, with the unchecked opportunity it offers for the acquisition of gains, luxuries, comforts, and for the indulgence of all sorts of private opinions and preferences, is liable to run out into an individualism, a thinking and caring of each one only for himself, and a neglect of our political duties, which are in direct antagonism with the love of country. There is a class of persons in this country, and I fear it is an increasing class, who, disgusted with politics, or fastidiously averse from free mingling with the people, or engrossed with business, are shrinking from their duties as citizens; who refuse to take office, avoid as much as they can every species of service to the public, even that of sitting on juries, and who neglect to deposit their ballot at the polls. In fact, there is a disintegration of society here, that is hostile not only to patriotic, but even to fixed party sentiments.

I have said thus much in general, with the view to open to you the subject on which I propose to address you this morning: and that is, our country, the love of our country, and the circumstances in our condition that are liable to weaken that great patriotic bond. I shall discuss a variety of questions; but they will have at least this unity; every question will come to this point, the love of our country, the right *appreciation* of it, the willing service which patriotism demands to be rendered to it; nay, the *filial* consideration and loyalty with which we ought to speak of it.

And first, let me say a word, of a reckless habit which we have, of *speaking* about the country. It may be regarded as a small matter—speech, the talk of the street,

the license of debate, in caucus or Congress—but I cannot think it so. Speech is the birth of opinion; and opinion is the womb of the unborn future. What we think and say, the coming generation are likely enough to do. Idle talk may resolve itself into dreadful fact. Let all men among us, talk as some men do; and a hurricane might pass over the land with less harm, than that idle or angry breath.

Nay, there are those who talk, as if they did not care how soon the worst came to pass. Disgusted with what they call the popular tendencies; disgusted with the upheaving of the popular mass, which they have never tried to direct or control; disgusted with the insubordination and irreverence of the young; disgusted altogether with our politics, they say—I have *heard* them say, "let the worst come; the sooner the better; the worse the better!" Now I confess that I can never hear this kind of talk, or anything approaching to it, without great pain. It discourages and saddens me. It discourages everybody. It is not good to hear. It is not good to think or say. I know that there is often a more grave and considerate talking, about popular derelictions and public corruption; and though I cannot altogether gainsay the justice of it, I must say it seems to me there is too much of it—such as it is. Let us *do* something and not always talk. Or if we must talk, let it be to inquire what we can do. But it is too often cold, scornful, sarcastic, bitter talk that I hear. If it were more painful, there would be less of it. I sat by a couple of gentlemen lately, who were speaking at length, of bribery and corruption in Congress. I could not help saying, "this talk always

makes me sick." So said one of them, "it makes me sick." But it went on. It always goes on. Fault finding is always eloquent; and it is easy. If the object were to inquire how we can correct our own, or our people's errors, it were profitable. But if it be only to vent our spleen, it is perilous. We may say of it, in relation to our country, what Burns says in another connection, "it petrifies the feeling."

And is it not a very strange thing? Was the like ever seen before; a people so recklessly criticizing itself; smiting the government, the country, and the country's hope, in one suicidal blow? This *passes* the ordinary limits of party animosity. Is there anything like it in England or France? Was there in old Rome? till its disastrous and declining days came, and seemed to justify the despair of Cicero, and the satire of Tacitus. But in its prosperous days were such words ever spoken? Why, I have heard a man standing in the high Senate of these United States—I have heard a senator say, "The president, and his cabinet, and both houses of congress, ought to be taken and pitched into the Potomac." If he had said such a thing in old Rome, he would himself have been pitched into the Tiber, and would have deserved it. And lately, in a speech in Congress, I hear the president called a "brigand!"

I take it upon me to rebuke such mad speaking. It should not have been possible to say or to hear such things in the Capitol. The man who undertook to say them, should have been drowned in hisses if it had been in a popular assembly, or if in the Senate, he should have been withered by its awful frown. I do not deny that

there should be a strict and solemn inquisition into the ways of the government and of the nation ; but I do deny that such indecent and abusive language should be used. I will not admit that it is right ever to speak thus of our country, or its government. This sublime nationality ; this embodied life of thirty millions of human souls ; this gathering under the awful wings of Providence, of six millions of families ; this majestic Rule that presides over them ; this struggling welfare and sorrow and hope of a great people, all bound up in the country's prosperity and progress ; this whole stupendous evolution of the fortunes of humanity, is it to be treated as lightly as if it were a game of football, or as angrily, with as much passion and despite, and rash exclamation of oaths or curses, as if it were a pugilistic fight ? How different was the spirit, how reverent, protective, and tender, with which Jesus looked upon his people ! And, indeed, what commanding dignity appears in his address to it ! And how evenly and perfectly was the balance held in him, between indignation and love ! The government was in bad hands enough ; and he was disowned, and rejected, and persecuted ; the Pharisees, the rulers, the Sanhedrim would not know him ; and yet sadly and indignantly as he speaks of all the wrong and evil there was in high places—yet no reckless satire or scorn ever fell from his lips ; but his great and loving heart burst out in melting expostulation, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !"

But the true question, I may be told, were, whether the country and government deserve to be spoken of with satire and scorn. This question concerns two very different things—the country and the government—and I shall treat of them separately.

Does the government deserve it? Is it as bad as it is often said to be? Has it become more corrupt than it was in former days? Has it declined from its pristine integrity? It may be true; I am afraid it is true; but it is to be remembered that our saying so does not prove it. Just as hard things have been said all along, of all the administrations, after the first; and even that, even Washington's, did not escape the most bitter reproaches. But just as hard, nay, harder things, were said of Jefferson and John Adams, and Madison and Monroe. Party animosity raged even more fiercely then, than it does now.

I have had, for my part, some salutary experience upon this matter. I remember the time when I was taught by those around me, to regard Thomas Jefferson as the basest and most dissolute and unprincipled of men. And I do not doubt that there are some here, who could tell me, that John Adams was treated with scarcely more decorum. Well, I have lived to see these two men in their old age, treating one another with respectful consideration, writing amiable and friendly letters to one another; and I have lived to see the time when they died on the same day—on that memorable fourth of July; and then I heard the voice of loud lament and eulogy bursting forth from the whole country; from all parties alike. It was a great lesson to me; and I resolved that I would never listen to the words of party clamor any more. And how is it

now, with Webster, and Clay, and Calhoun! Why, it is coming to be generally admitted, even by their opponents, that however they may have erred, however they may have acted under biases and prejudices, they loved their country; and that in the circumstances in which they were placed, they did what they thought was right. Can any more be said of the integrity of statesmen than this? And if there be men now standing high among us—I say not this or that man—but if there be *any* who may meet with a similar reversal of the popular or party award, from the calm judgment of posterity, nay, and are likely enough, judging from the past, to do so, ought it not to stir a sacred caution in our minds, how we treat them? Doubtless a government may grow more and more corrupt. Doubtless there are found, from time to time, in seats of power, bad men and bad magistrates. But it must be a sad thing, it must be a terrible thing, for us on mere party and mistaken biases, to admit that the whole government of the country is sinking deeper and deeper in corruption every year. Neither Statesmen, nor any other men, can fairly be expected to be better than we account them to be. This constant depreciating and vilifying of the government, by one half of the people, tends to bring about the very state of things we lament over, and we may help to verify in misery and disgrace, the very prophecy of our haste and wrath.

I admit that in some respects, there is a descent from the dignity and perhaps virtue of former days. It is constantly said, that an inferior class of men is chosen to public office; and I will not deny it. Every nation perhaps, has its golden age; or what seems to be such.

In the early times of the Republic, the natural anxiety of the people, called the highest men into the public service. We have grown easy and careless. But this is not all. The representative principle was not at once developed here in its full force; or rather it was not abused, as it is now. For a long time there was a class of men, regarded as superior persons, to whom the people naturally looked as their leaders and legislators. That natural aristocracy is now to a certain extent disowned; and the candidate for office is preferred perhaps, because he is *not* of that class. It is an unfortunate reaction. Then too, men of culture and refinement, are more and more shrinking and retiring from public life. It is an unfortunate tendency. The consequence of all this, is seen in a deterioration of manners, in our high places. We hear of rude and abusive personalities in debate, nay, of actual combats and blows in the halls of Congress; of blows more wounding to the public heart, even than to the unworthy combatants. That rule in Congressional speeches which is called the "one hour rule," however necessary it may have been, and however just and reasonable, has undoubtedly had the effect to lower the dignity of debate. Formerly, a few leading members discussed great questions. Now, a much larger class are brought upon the floor; and the manners are worse. Then again, terrible questions are now brought forward, questions about the public lands, about annexation of territory, about slavery, which try the integrity, the virtue, the composure, the self-possession of public men, more than they were tried in former days. All this, I trust, is transitional, and will pass away. It does not prove to me that the natural

tendency of free suffrage and a free Constitution, under fair conditions, is to carry a government downward.

But the more serious question is about the moral progress or deterioration of the whole country. *Government* is, to the people, a mystery. The eye of the popular conscience is not fairly opened to it. Hence it comes to pass that things are abetted in public, which would not be tolerated in private life. This separation between political and personal morality, which is doing so much mischief all over the world, it is to be hoped is temporary here, and will be searched into and stigmatized and stamped with utter reprobation, by a more enlightened public opinion. Men, I trust, will come to look at the persons who administer public affairs, as keenly as they investigate the conduct of bank or railroad directors, nay, and will judge and act as stockholders, in the great national interest, demanding, irrespective of party biases,—demanding, I say, probity in the one as much as in the other, resolving to elect no man to public affairs who is not an honest and good man.

But the question about the *national* character is disembarrassed from these considerations; and it cuts deeper. It is a momentous question certainly, and demands the gravest and most anxious study. It is a question for ourselves. It matters little comparatively what others say of us, though they are saying much on the other side, at the present moment. Nor is this surprising; for the example of universal suffrage and of popular rule, which we have set up here, must of course be subjected to the severest scrutiny. Does it *work* well? is the question.

Theories are nothing; does it work well? And there is a party in England which maintains that it does not. They say that everything is running down here.

Is it true? *Are* we becoming a more unprincipled, vicious, dissolute people? Are we less honest, less temperate, less benevolent, less reverent, less pure in manners and morals, than our predecessors were half a century ago? Has our freedom run out into general license? Or is there to be seen in the country at large, any tendency of the kind?

This is not the place to say how humble is the estimate which every right-minded people must form of its virtues; or how deep is the sense, which every conscientious and thoughtful man must entertain of the national defects; let the nation be which it will, American or French or English. Next to the burden which his own faults lay upon such a man, I believe, is the sad feeling he has, in contemplating the too common depravity and degradation around him, the baseness in high places and low, the drunkenness and debauchery, the sins, secret and open, which cover all the world with darkness, and fill it with tears. This is doubtless a wise direction of men's thoughts, whether in this country or any other country; whether for a Fast Day or any other day. And I will not leave it to be inferred, from anything I shall say, that I am insensible to this humbling and painful contemplation of our moral condition. Before a righteous conscience let every people bow low; before accusers speaking in the interest of king-ship and aristocracy, and trying to discredit free governments, it must assume a different attitude.

And the question here, let it be observed, is not how bad we are, but whether we are regularly and constantly growing worse; whether we are going down in national character; and I deliberately say, I do not believe it; I do not admit any such thing. Nay, it is rather observable, that the men who are wont to speak the most bitterly of their country—I mean the ultra-reformers, the abolitionists, for instance, and come-outers of all sorts—do nevertheless comfort themselves with the belief, that their labors have not been in vain; that there is a better tone of sentiment and a better state of morals among us, than there was twenty years ago.

But I do not deny that there are some bad indications, explicable, I think, however, on other grounds than that of a general tendency and sweep downwards. In the moral condition of a people, there will always be oscillations. There are local circumstances, affecting moral conduct; there are great movements of society; there are reactions; all writers on statistics know this, and the moral critic is bound to consider it. Thus, in the education of the young, obedience fails to be enforced among us, to an extent positively alarming; but I believe that it is a reaction from the old parental rigor; and I think I already see indications of return to wholesome discipline. Then again, we have heard much of social disorders; of the bowie-knife and lynch-law on our Western border. This state of things is evidently owing to circumstances; and, what is especially to be observed, this border line of semi-civilized life, instead of coming this way, as it should, according to the argument of deterioration, is constantly retreating. So in our

cities, we have seen violence and sad misrule, enough to furnish a loud argument against us on the other side of the water, and loud admonition to ourselves. The truth is, we have been slowly learning, how, under our popular system, to govern cities. And I think we are solving the problem. And again I say it is observable that the disturbance is retiring; it is passing, so to say, along down our coast cities; and in one after another it is controlled. We had mobs in Boston, New Bedford, Providence, New York. We have them no more. Disorders still prevail in Philadelphia, especially among the fire-engine companies—organizations which I hope will ere long be entirely supplanted by the use of steam-engines—and in Baltimore, from political causes. The truth is, and we are finding it out, that nothing but military force will hold in check the lower populace of our cities. With regard to misrule, to corruption in our city governments, the only remedy lies in agencies far more difficult to be called forth. For until the superior classes in our cities, the men of wealth and education, will consent to take the part which they ought to take, in our elections and in our municipal affairs, there *will* be misrule and corruption, injuring the public interest, and shaming all good men. The evil is growing so monstrous, that I cannot help believing, it will drive us upon the obvious remedy. Then once more, it is said that crime is increasing in this country faster than population. Is it strange that it should do so? Does it fairly indicate the general character of our people, when it is well known that so much of it is imported from foreign countries? Of the criminals convicted in our

Courts,—a large proportion come from abroad. In some instances, we are told, that the very penitentiaries and almshouses of the continent of Europe, have been emptied of their miserable tenants, to be shipped off to America. More than nine tenths of the paupers and beggars in our cities come from the Old World. Everybody knows how rare it is, to meet with a native American mendicant.

There is altogether a mode of reasoning about this matter, or rather a way of representing things, that is unfair and unjust. The foreign journals get hold of here and there a fact, or of a gossiping story told by some traveller, and forthwith set it up as a placard against a whole people. And they talk too, of mobs and popular outbreaks here. Have they none, in the cities of Europe? There has not been, I confidently say, since we have been a nation, such a stable and undisturbed order of society in the world, as our own. They say tauntingly, "here is a young people, a people in the flush of its morning, a people that ought to be in a condition of pristine virtue and innocence, and yet so full of vices and crimes, so "full of sores and ulcers," that its friends, as they look at it, must hang their heads in shame. The case is *not* so. Society here is primarily an offshoot from society in Europe, in its average condition. And then in later days, what shoals of the base and abandoned, have been floated to this country from foreign shores! And what multitudes of ignorant and miserable paupers from abroad, have been cast upon our hands, employing, as we well know, all the benevolent energies of our cities! I think we deserve some better return than taunts for our care of them.

It is indeed a very extraordinary condition of things. No people in the world, was ever before subjected to such a trial. Ah! it is very easy to stand with folded hands on the opposite shore, and say, "what a bad plight you are in!"

As to the absolute question of our growing better or worse, there are many things to be considered. The liberalizing and enlightening of a people, have their perils; we may welcome the general result, and yet look with anxiety at some of the processes and steps. The growth of wealth and luxury, is still more perilous; but some extravagance in living, and some foolish fashions—late hours and lavish entertainments, though economically bad, and bad for health, may not be so bad as the case-hardened rigor of the old Puritan time, the stern face which it wore toward all the gayeties and pleasures of life, the mingled hypocrisy and fear which it branded into the youthful mind. The notion that the more miserable a man *is*, and *feels*, and *looks*, the better man he is; and the more happy and gay, the worse—this wrong to Providence, this base crouching under its mighty dome of light and blessing—we may well be thankful that it is passing away. Changes which to the strict and conservative eye wear a bad aspect, may not be for the worse. There is more liberality with regard to amusements; but certainly the festal habits of our people have improved. There are not so many brutal fights on public days, as there were forty years ago; there is not so much drunkenness at feasts, or town meetings, or military parades; there is not so much profane swearing. In fact, it is capable of demonstration, I believe, that fifty or eighty years ago, under the incrusta-

tions of the old Puritanism, viler streams of intemperance and licentiousness, were stealing through our New England society, than can be found now.

In short, I say that society, in its whole spirit, tone, and character, is improved. There is less intolerance, whether religious, political, or social, than there was half a century ago. New views, whether with regard to the rights of men, or the sphere of woman, or the improvement of society, receive a more hospitable entertainment than they did then. Slander, running its gossiping round, leaving its poisonous slaver wherever it winds; I believe there is less of it than there was. People have books, reviews, newspapers, lectures, concerts to occupy them; and the neighbor's character oftener escapes. And in business; that system of preference-credits, that dishonorable evasion of fair and open responsibility; I ask you, if it is not in greater discredit, than it was twenty years ago. And in fine, I put it to any discerning and thoughtful man, who has reached middle life, whether he does not find society more just, tolerant, frank, and fearless, little enough as there is of all this, than it was twenty years ago.

My subject in this discourse, is the love of country. We cannot love our country as a country should be loved, but it must be—I hope it will not be thought a weakness to say—with something of reverence and tenderness, with something of enthusiasm and pride for it; and we cannot hear it recklessly vilified or wrongfully accused, without remonstrance. It is to these points therefore that I have now been speaking.

In the same patriotic interest I am tempted to add a word or two on another point.

In the all-criticizing spirit of the time, there is a sort of incredible talk among us about national failure, about the sundering of the national bond, about the disuniting of these States; these Federal States as we call them. The possibility of using such language arises in part, I think, from our calling them Federal States,—deriving our notion, or our nomenclature at least, from the old Colonial time. We are *not* confederated States as, till recently, the Swiss Cantons were. We are not a league, but a nation. We are one nation, as much as any other nation is. And what other nation in its palmy day, ever talked of disunion, as some among us do. "Dis—*what?*"—I could imagine a sensible man to say, who heard the word for the first time, and fancied he did not rightly hear—"disaffection, I can understand, distrust, disorder, but *disunion?* You might as well talk of a disunion of the Alleghany mountains from one another. You might as well talk of the disunion of the Mississippi River from itself." Nay, and these are not only illustrations, but facts. Nature has made this North American empire *morally* indissoluble. How are you to cut the Mississippi River in two, giving the southern half to one nation and the northern half to another?—the southern dictating on what terms the northern should pass through. And our railroads fast engirdling the whole empire, and our common interest and honor, and our patriotic memories, growing more venerable as they grow older, constantly bind us more strongly together. To be sure, I do not know what *may be* in the future; but for the present time I hold it to be but patriotic policy and decency, to shut our ears against that miserable, paltry, party word,

disunion—spawn of factious discontent, and reckless freedom.

But do not the Southern States, from time to time, threaten to break off and go out of the Union? *Not* the southern *States;* only *one*, and that only *once*. For the rest, *some men* at the South talk in this wild fashion; that is all. But I do not deny that this is enough, and more than enough. I do not deny that the difficulty to which I now refer is serious enough. But is it insuperable? It is the only question that threatens the national integrity. Is there no solution for it but a violent and bloody one?

I cannot, and I do not believe it. But I confess that no shadow of mystery, that ever hung over the fairest fortunes of the human race, has seemed to me darker than this. Why it is, that the Almighty Providence has permitted this root of bitterness to be planted in the soil of our Republic, to trouble the grandest political experiment that ever was made in human affairs, no mortal eye can see! It may be that since, in this fair domain and under this large freedom—since, I say, prosperity, wealth, and luxury were to start forth on such a career as they never ran before, one thing was permitted that should try men's souls; that should humble our pride, that should task our patience, our calmness, our forbearance, our love of country to the utmost.

Would to God that we could see it in this light, instead of throwing upon this debatable ground the burning coals of strife! Instead of doing all that we can to provoke and vilify, and estrange one another, would that we could sit down together as brethren, and as in the pres-

ence of God, and sincerely and solemnly ask ; what we can do ?—what we ought to do ? What is our duty ? What is right ? What is best for all ? Here is a people planted upon our territory ; a portion of the human race ; inferior to ourselves, if you please, but human ; and placed here without any fault of our own ; nay, placed here against the remonstrances of our fathers ; nay, more, so far as we are concerned, put, by an inscrutable Providence, into our hands; and now what is our duty to them? What ought a just people to do for them ? What ought a paternal and Christian government to do ?

What *ought* we to do, I say; for there *is* a question of *the right*, which is above every other question. I grieve to hear any high-minded man, swayed by party biases, speak lightly of this highest law. Without it, we are not men, but brutes. No men, nor nations can truly respect themselves, unless they bow in reverence before this sublime authority. What is the canonized virtue of ages ; what do we venerate in heroes and martyrs ; what is it, without which there is left no worth nor dignity in the world, but *the right?* Nations may rise and prosper ; generations may sweep over the earth, and eloquent histories be written of them ; planets might roll, and stars wheel round their mighty centres—they are but dust and ashes, unless the law of the *everlasting right* reigns over them !

What, then, is it right for us to do with regard to this African people ? Emancipate them at once ; turn them adrift from our care, and take off the hand of restraint ; let them be free as ourselves ; free to work or to be idle

as they please, free to roam hither and thither as they will, free to vote or to bear arms like other freemen? *I* do not say so. I may be wrong, but that is not my opinion. Certainly there is a profound conviction to the contrary, among the Southern people.

What is the right then? I answer, it is to consider and care for these people, so strangely and sadly intrusted to us; to consider and care for them as *men*. It is to educate, instruct, Christianize them. Why, we send missions to the farthest heathen for that. It is to pass laws for the gradual amelioration of their condition. It is ultimately to emancipate them. With regard to the steps, I cannot go into detail. The problem will be one of immense difficulty and complication, far greater than that which was involved in the treatment of the serfs in the Middle Ages.

But this at least we can do. We can set up *the right* to be the sovereign law in this whole proceeding. There is always a conflict, more or less, between natural right and municipal regulation. In the case of Slavery, that conflict is carried to the extremest point of contradiction. It is in vain to deny it. The slave has a perfect right, if he can, to run away. I never saw a man, North or South, who denied it. But the municipal law steps in and stops him. It is a grievous solecism; it is a sad conflict between a man's rights and society's rights. But I cannot deny that society has a right to restrain actions, otherwise right, naturally right, which tend to its own destruction. I have a natural right to eat and drink, and to buy and sell what I will—alcohol, or poison, or gunpowder—yet society claims the right, by license-laws, to restrain me.

But still there is a Supreme Law which says that that contrariety shall be lessened, as fast as the general welfare and safety will permit. And to hold that extremest contradiction to natural right which slavery presents—to hold it, I say, fast clenched ; to repel the very idea that it ought to be lessened or loosened in any way ; to say that it is right and always shall be, to buy and sell men and their posterity after them forever ; and to demand that the common and supreme Government of the land shall, by its action, avouch this local and municipal bond to be altogether right, shall adopt, espouse, recognize it, shall enact into its laws, legitimate in its territories, this grand and world-condemned wrong to humanity ; this is what we never can consent to.

Alas! the time was, when the South mainly agreed with us in this ; when it admitted that slavery was an evil, and in its origin a wrong, which must be corrected in due time. But it has been goaded by the violence of our disputes, into an opposite position. Is it not possible that it should take a step backward ; while we on our part, forsake the attitude of sectional antagonism, except in *opinion*, which we cannot help ; and that we should all agree, that slavery should be left just where it is ; to be dealt with by those who alone have the charge and the responsibility ; just as if the Southern people were a foreign nation ; our common, our general government, doing nothing for it, nor against it, but simply letting it alone ; simply keeping the bond of the Constitution ; no more discussing it in Congress, than if it were Russian serfdom ; making no fugitive slave-laws, nor any other laws about it ; but simply, I repeat, letting it alone. If the

people of the South could consent to that, ceasing to be propagandists of their system, it would be doubtless a concession of municipal or pecuniary claim on their part, to moral principle ; but, would it not be a noble concession ? Why, the whole progress of justice and freedom in the world has involved precisely that concession. Arbitrary kingships, aristocracies, customs, laws, rights of possession, have always been giving way to the moral claim. The ordinance of '87 was precisely such a concession. Upon no other principle was slavery prohibited from going into the Northwest Territory. And when we at the North, refuse to open the New Territories to that system, it is, in my mind, mainly upon the same ground. If the slaves were ordinary property, if they were but horses or oxen, we should think it monstrous to say to their owners, "You shall not take them there." It is because they are men, because their presence there would injure the public interest—would injure the free white laborer ; because, in short, it is a thing that ought to be repressed, not extended, that we insist upon that concession. Would it not be an honor to the Southern men to make it ? It would be returning to the ground with regard to this institution, which their fathers held. It would be to throw off from their shoulders, the responsibility for a system which they did not create, but have inherited. Now, alas ! they assume and avouch it to be their own, and to be right and good. The moral sentiments of the world are *against* that stand. Can they hold it ?

I have thus far been engaged in the discussion of some questions concerning the treatment of our country, con-

cerning its moral condition, and the one great danger to it. And here, perhaps, I ought to stop; but I cannot leave the subject, without undertaking to say something of what a true patriotism demands of us; what of duty, fealty, and affection.

I must detain you with one preliminary remark, which goes through the whole subject. It is this; and I would emphasize it: *Universal civilized modern society is entering upon a political condition, which devolves an entirely new charge and responsibility upon citizenship.* Under absolute rule the subject had little to do with regard to government, but to submit to what was ordained for him. There was no pulpit, nor press, nor caucus, nor ballot that could fairly speak out; or that could exert any efficient influence upon public affairs. The popular conscience, instead of being educated to a sense of duty to the common weal, was crushed down by political injustice and oppression. Indeed, the spectacle of selfishness, seated on the throne and ruling in the court, too often taught the people only to be selfish,—to hoard their property or to tie it up in entails, and to pursue their pleasures, with little sense of what they owed to the country. The Grecian and Roman republics did, indeed, during their brief continuance, develope a vigorous love of country, but scarcely inculcated any duty to it, beyond that of fighting its battles.

Now, it is not to be so, it must not be so, in our modern free States, if they are to work out any happy condition or high destiny. *We* are to make and keep and guard the State; we, the people, are to do it, by personal care and fidelity. The machinery of the public

order will not roll on smoothly and safely without our intervention ; nay, we *are* the machinery. The government cannot go on prosperously without us, we standing aloof and looking on ; nay, we *are* the government !

Here it is, I conceive, that our modern free communities have fallen into an immense and perilous mistake. We have inherited our ideas of citizenship from former times and from a different order of society ; and they do not apply to our condition. Always and everywhere the more liberty there is, the more duties there are to be done. All along on the line of progression, from animal instinct or from the lowest point of barbarism, up to the highest intellectual power and freedom, it will be found that more and more depends upon the individual ; that more and more trusts are committed to him. The whole framework of government and society, becomes more and more complicated. The King of Dahomey, or the Emperor of China, has but few laws ; and the people have nothing to do but to obey them. We make the laws, multiply them, change them, execute them. No man stands alone, or can rightly stand apart. Every citizen is brought into immediate relations with the welfare of the State. Every citizen has duties to perform to the country. And every instrumentality, organ, and office, that has power to influence the public welfare, should be subject to the same patriotic obligation.

It should be recognized, first, in our schools and colleges. There should be taught in them, as a distinct branch of education, the duties of citizenship. In our technical views of what constitutes education, this practical and pressing interest has been strangely overlooked.

I am told that the schools of semi-barbarous Japan are ahead of us in this respect; that the children there are instructed in the actual duties of coming life. We want, in our schools, a Political Class-Book, more comprehensive and simple, too, than any I know of,—though an excellent work of the kind was written by Mr. William Sullivan, of this city,—a book that should instruct youth in the nature of our government, in the duties of citizens, of voters, jurors, magistrates, and legislators; in the morals of politics and parties, in the principles upon which the vote should be given; how much should be conceded to party organization, and what should never be conceded to it. And if there were a plain chapter or two on Logic, I think it would be well,—teaching the young something about the principles of right reasoning, —that of which our people know less than of almost anything else; our politics, our caucuses, our newspapers, are about as full of one-sided and fallacious reasonings as they can hold.

Next, the pulpit owes a duty to the country. We are constantly complaining that political morality is at a low ebb, and is sinking every day, lower and lower. What duty of the pulpit is plainer, than to speak of immorality, and especially of that which cuts most directly and deeply into the heart of the common welfare, political immorality? This wretched and ruinous distinction between public and private virtue, between political and personal integrity; this permitting and expecting men in official stations, to act on principles that would dishonor them in trade and at home; this giving all fealty to party and none to the country; *whose*

duty is it to strike at this stupendous demoralization, if it is not that of the preacher? If, as a trustee of private funds, a man cannot cheat or embezzle without a black mark being set upon him, without being driven out from the society of all honest and honorable men; shall a public trust be violated, a trust confided to a man by his fellow-citizens, a trusteeship for the whole country and for unborn generations; shall it be violated and nothing be said of it, but that it is just what might be expected? Shall this huge dereliction be visited only with a sneer; and that, more at the miserable state of the country, than at the men who dishonor it?

The sacredness of every political trust; the *awfulness* of government—I speak advisedly; the solemn significance, the binding and religious obligation of the oath, with which a man swears that he will "well and truly" serve his country; what holy bond can be more properly insisted on, in the pulpit, than this? No "sanctitude of kings" ought to be more venerable than the magistracy of a free State. No holy conclave ought to be more sober and conscientious than a congress of men, chosen and set and bound, to think and act for the welfare of a great people.

And why shall not the pulpit speak of and for the country, for the common weal? Why shall it not speak great and solemn words for patriotic duty, for sobriety and thoughtfulness, and moderation, and mutual love? Why shall it not plead for the country? I cannot help thinking that if all the pulpits in the land, were to do their duty in this respect, the result would be marked and visible; and we should not have all political action dese-

crated as it now, too often, is, cast out under the trampling feet of party violence and recklessness, a game for the adroit, a butt for satire, rather than a bond for conscience and honor. If the clergy want texts they may find enough of them, in David and Isaiah, and in the books of the New Testament.

The relation of the Press, to the country is sufficiently recognized; and the only question is, about the use it shall make of its acknowledged and immense power. I am glad that it is free; and no abuse of which it is capable would seem to me so odious as a government censorship; as the ignominious bondage which is now imposed upon the Press in France. Where there is not free debate of every kind—free talk in the streets, free speech in public, free printing everywhere—there is no political freedom.

Still I could wish that the press might consider *for itself*, what restrictions patriotism, justice, and honorable fair play, should lay upon it. A man should not feel more at liberty to put forth rash, hasty, and inconsiderate words, because he is an editor, cloaked in his closet, but less, incomparably less. The private man speaks to his neighbor; the editor of a newspaper, to thousands.

I have observed with pleasure, that two or three Conventions of Editors have been lately held in the country. I hope there will be more of them. Why should not discussions be entertained in such Conventions, on the principles upon which the Press should be conducted—on Editorial duties and rights, and inter-editorial courtesy and forbearance? The clergy meet together to consider their duty and work: so do teachers of youth.

Why might not editors? Their position makes them teachers and guides to the people. And why, in fact, should there not be in our system of education, a distinct department of preparation for the editor's chair, as well as for the law, or medicine or theology?

It is every man's interest and duty, as far as possible, to hold just, large, well-proportioned views of things. Why should a man be willing to be one-sided, to be given over to partial and party views of subjects, because he is an editor? Are we never to see in party prints any fair admission of what is right on the other side? And there is another thing still more vital to the editorial conscience and honor. There is a line which should never be crossed without sacred caution: it is the line beyond which lies the domain of private character. I do not mean of the private life only, but of a man's essential claims to rectitude of purpose. Personalities seldom serve any good end; they subserve many bad passions. Measures may be freely and roughly handled; motives may not. And the contest here is too unequal for honorable assault—except in very extreme cases. The man who commands a battery, should beware, for his honor, how he opens it upon an unarmed man. For the single man against such a force, *is* virtually unarmed. He has no fair chance. He cannot answer. He does not answer; except in words, which if they become common, will alike degrade the press, and destroy its power—"Oh! it isn't worth noticing; it is only a newspaper!"

A free State, I repeat, unlike a despotism, must engage the services of all its citizens, in their appropriate duties. A representative system requires of every man the vote.

Trial by jury, demands that every man should sit on the jury, when he is summoned to that service. And to fill a public office, when the expressed wish of the citizens designate the man, is scarcely short of an obligation. Our compact is, thus to serve one another, in the great interests of the Commonwealth. Travellers in this country have made it a reproach against us, that we are all engaged in politics. We *ought* to be engaged in them; not as petty politicians, but as men observant and thoughtful, and anxious for the common weal. Mr. Wordsworth, the great English poet, once said to an American visitor, with whom he had talked a long time on the English and American systems—"I am chiefly known to the world as a poet; but I think that during my whole life, I have given ten hours' thought to politics for one to poetry." The visitor said in reply, "I am not surprised at that; for the spirit of your poetry is the spirit of humanity; and the grandest visible form of human interests, is politics."

Was he not right? And do not the most influential men and the highest minds among us, owe an especial duty to the country? There are not a few men among us who seem to me strangely insensible to this duty. There are respectable persons that I hear say, and who seem to pride themselves in saying, that "they care nothing about politics." Business men in our cities avoid as much as they can, sitting on juries; preferring to pay a fine for neglect. There is a conservatism among the more wealthy and cultivated classes, that looks with cold disdain or strange timidity upon those popular elements, that are working out the common weal or woe. Instead of stepping forward and taking their proper place, they

shrink into corners. This timidity of conservatism is in Anglo-Saxon men the strangest thing! Let the popular wave arise, and they flee before it, like sheep before a pack of wolves. Let municipal questions agitate the people, and violence be threatened; and they turn back and leave it for those who *will*, to take the lead. They say that the public interests, nay and the very rights of property, are in peril; and they do nothing but submit. Is there no English hardihood left among us for emergencies like these? Is the fairest chance for self-government and national freedom, ever accorded to men, to be given over to pure faint-heartedness or scorn?

I would not, however, be thought to speak with unreasonable severity of these doubts and fears of conservatism. I would not make a bugbear of this distrust. I feel it in a degree myself; every thinking man feels it. And it is not peculiar to us in this country. In every country thoughtful men feel it. In France, nay in England, do they not feel it? Do they not entertain the question, whether the present order of things will hold; whether changes, whether revolutions may not come? But this is what I say. Is this distrust to be made an argument for deserting the post of duty, for giving up the cause of the country?

It is against this faint-heartedness that I contend; and I hope I may be pardoned for doing so pointedly and earnestly. I would use no unbecoming adjuration, but I would say, if it were proper for me to say, to all conservative doubters—for the sake of everything momentous and holy, Sirs, arouse you to your duties. Slavery excepted, I know of nothing more ominous for the country than

your own position in it. Why, I have been told that a distinguished foreigner who has spent a year or two among us, says he has hardly met a man in the higher society, who did not look with entire distrust to our future. If it be so, I will tell you whom he has met. He has met *you*, the ultra-conservative men of the country. He could never have heard anything like this, from the great body of our intelligent people. But if the danger were *real*, I can tell you what would do more than anything else to avert it. Let thirty men that I could name in each of our cities, and a hundred in each State, go freely into the popular assemblies; let them speak there; let them speak wisely, manfully, kindly, liberally, and generously—with a heart full and warm for their brother-men and for the common country; and I believe the effect would be incalculable.

Do you say it would be troublesome to vote and serve on juries, and to go and speak in popular assemblies? But *what* duty is *not* sometimes troublesome? To rear a family, to provide for it, to build up an estate, is troublesome. The student's, the lawyer's, the physician's life has its troubles, its disagreeable things to do. The soldier must stand sentinel, stand in the trenches, stand in the imminent deadly breach; and ill should we think of him, if he lay in his luxurious tent when hardship and danger demanded him. And are the duties that we owe to the whole embodied life of the Republic, to be exempted from the obligation that presses everywhere else? No, I firmly say it; we must march up to the breach when duty or danger to our country calls; we, in the whole country, we, in cities. All the respectability, influence,

wealth, learning, culture in our cities, should be seen at the polls, and often at the primary meetings. If in timidity, in cowardice, in fastidiousness or scorn, they stand back and give place to ignorance, brutality, and violence, whose then will the fault be, if the lower elements get uppermost? Troublesome, indeed! Let me tell you that something more troublesome will come; ay, trouble that we think little of now, if we neglect to guard the house. Troublesome, forsooth! Where are the courage and manliness and self-sacrifice of honest and honorable men? For I say, if we could truly understand it, that amidst ease, and abundance, and luxury, there is as much self-sacrifice required to keep all right and safe, as there is in scenes of revolution and blood. We *know*, that if every man in this country will do his duty, all will go well. And of whom may we demand that they do their duty, if not of those who have, or conceive that they have, the most at stake? And what if such a man were stricken down, by popular violence—stricken down at the polls—ay, murdered, martyred! It would be a glorious martyrdom. It would do more to appall the lawless and arouse the negligent, than a whole life could do.

But, says some learned or fastidious and delicate gentleman, "what can I do in the primary assemblies? They wont hear me." There it is again—that mistimed timidity or morbid self-esteem. But I say they *will* hear. They want to hear from those whom they involuntarily respect as men of wealth, education, and influence. And they must hear from them. Republics must be brotherhoods. Free communities, free cities cannot go on well, if the most influential persons in them retire in disgust

and disdain from all participation in their affairs. The English aristocracy are beginning to feel this; they are learning that Ἄριστοι—the best—must mean something more than fashionable idlers or mere cultivators of their estates; and they are more and more mingling with the people, at least in their social, municipal and political affairs and interests. They are living more for the public and for the common weal, than they once did. Nothing else can justify their position, in an intelligent and increasingly free community. And nothing else can make any similar position right, in a free country. This is the price that a guarded liberty must pay: a guarded liberty I say, and none other can be kept, or be long worth keeping. This is the price, I believe, and therefore I insist upon it —this care, this common interest, this intervention in affairs, of the highest men among us, this friendly and fraternal mingling together of all the elements that constitute a free nationality.

A free nationality, I say; and I believe that we have yet to come to a new idea of what it is; of what our own is; of what every nationality is. It is God's ordinance. Men cannot work out the ends for which they are placed on earth, without being gathered into communities under the protection of government. This national bond is God's ordinance; and it must have man's respect, reverence, and cherishing affection.

We *are* not—and we *ought* not—to care for England or for France, as we do for our own country. *Here* the God of Nations has set us down; and drawn about us the bonds of the public order; and girdled us round with ocean barriers and chains of ocean lakes; and

spread out this realm of day-dawn and sunset, and healthy climates, and mighty forests, and glorious prairies, long kept and hid from other lands by the waves and storms of the mighty deep—this realm richer than the Hesperides, vaster than Imperial Rome,—to be the empire of a great people.

We love our country. We are proud of it. We know that no nation on earth ever set out on such a career before. It had its *beginnings* in the most advanced civilization in the world; and other good elements have mingled and become blended with it. We love our country. *Let* us love it. Let us be proud of it. I will listen to any high patriotic adjuration, to any solemn admonition; but I will not *listen* to any cold and blighting disparagement. Not only has there been a more rapid growth in wealth and population here, than anywhere else, but more inventions of the subtle intellect have originated here than in any other country; more churches and schools and colleges have been built; more books and newspapers and journals have been printed and read; and more enterprises have been undertaken here, for the reform of morals, for the relief of the poor, and the fallen, and the insane, for the spread of religion at home and abroad. And shall any clique of croakers or fanatics stand before this mighty people and point the finger and say, "Aha! go down! go to pieces! you *are* going down; you are not worthy to live!"

No! wide let patriotic honor and trust and hope beat, from North to South, from East to West; like the mighty ocean waves that engirdle us; like the fresh breezes that sweep through our valleys. For this reason

—for the culture of patriotic sentiments, I am glad to witness that enterprise which is taken up by our whole people, for setting apart and consecrating the residence of the Father of his country, to be his perpetual memorial. I am glad that it is to be done by individual contributions rather than by act of Congress. I am glad that efforts and appeals of every kind, that journals, and speeches, and eloquent orations have gone forth, to stir the national heart.

To gather up, and fix, and perpetuate through all time the great memories of our national life—what place so fit as Mount Vernon! It may be to this country, I will not say what Versailles is to France; for the voluptuous and selfish monarch who built it, stamped upon it quite another character, and did more, in fact, to bring down ruin upon the monarchy than ever was done by any other single action; but it may be what the last king of France desired to make of Versailles, a grand historical monument. The gardens of Versailles, about as large as the estate of Mount Vernon, are laid out with walks through avenues of trees, with many a turn and winding into bowers and boskets, adorned with sheets and falls of water, and filled with fountains. The palace walls are hung with historical pictures of the great men and times of France. Why may not Mount Vernon become in time the more than Versailles of America—its tangled woods cleared up, its barren fields covered with living verdure, and pathways opened all around and through its ample domain, for the generations of all coming time to walk in—drawn thither by attractions of landscape-art, and historic pictures and statuary, and

touched by historic memories surely not less grand and inspiring than those of any people that ever lived.

Yes, and *above* all, let the great name of Washington rise; of him who did more than any man to make us a people, and whose name more than any man's binds us together; of him whom the great poets, and orators, and historians of all countries unite to-day, to proclaim the most perfect model of heroic patriotism; of him who served us without recompense, who governed without ostentation, and whose sway was that of patience, probity, wisdom and modesty; of him whose imperturbable dignity controlled officers and soldiers alike; whose natural vehemence was chastened by the solemnity of his mission; and whose calmest words thrilled the hearts of men like electric fire; of him who was a tower of strength in the day of our weakness, and a pillar of fire in the darkness and storm; and who, had an imperial diadem been offered him, in the day of his victory, would not have reluctantly declined it, as Cæsar did, but would have trampled it under foot as a painted bawble; of him, whom, when he died, a weeping nation declared to be "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."